

Hindu nationalist government have been conducting an organized campaign against the Pope as part of a concerted effort to demonize and persecute the country's tiny Christian minority."

In the article, Dreher states that there were 108 cases of beatings, stonings, church burnings, looting of religious schools, and other attacks on Christians. Freedom House, a widely respected human-rights monitoring organization, reports that there have been more incidents of violence against Indian Christians in the past year than in the previous 50 years, even though Christians make up just 3 percent of India's population.

Missionary Graham Staines and his two young sons were burned to death in their Jeeps by a Hindu mob affiliated with the ruling party. The Hindu militants surrounded the jeep and chanted "Victory to Lord Ram." Last month, Hindu fundamentalists kidnapped a nun named Sister Ruby and forced her to drink their body fluids. These are only two of so many incidents that I have lost count.

There have been cases of forcible reconversion to Hinduism along with the violent incidents against Christians and Christian institutions. Many of us have been standing here discussing this, yet it continues to go on in a country that continues to proclaim itself democratic.

It is not just the Christians. The persecution of Sikhs and Muslims has been well documented in this body time and time again. India has killed over 200,000 Christians since independence, and it has also murdered over 250,000 Sikhs, more than 65,000 Muslims, and tens of thousands of others. The highest shrines of India's Sikh and Muslim communities have been attacked by the Indian government.

It is clear that there is no religious freedom in "democratic" India. How can we be upset about China's persecution of Falun Gong and turn our heads when India practices oppression on Christians, Sikhs, Muslims, and others?

It is our responsibility as the leader of the Free World to help ensure freedom for everyone on the planet. We must subject India to the same penalties we impose on any other country that violates religious freedom. We should stop our aid to India until it respects basic human rights, including religious freedom. We should put the Congress on record in support of self-determination for all the minority nations that India is victimizing. Finally, I call on President Clinton to stress these human rights and self determination issues when he visits India early next year.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to put Mr. Dreher's article into the RECORD for the information of my colleagues.

POPE'S PASSAGE TO INDIA MAY BE MOST
PERILOUS YET

[From the New York Post, Oct. 28, 1999]

(By Fred Dreher)

Will Pope John Paul II be safe in India? There is more reason to worry for the pontiff's welfare as he visits the world's largest democracy next week than there was when he went to communist Poland under martial law.

That's because a small but violent faction of Hindu fundamentalists aligned with the Hindu nationalist government have been conducting an organized campaign against the pope as part of a concerted effort to demonize and persecute the country's tiny Christian minority.

The government promises to protect the Holy Father from coalition fanatics. But while John Paul can rely on state security, his Catholic followers and Protestant brethren remain at the mercy of Hindu brown-shirts.

These thugs have carried out vicious attacks on Christians since a coalition led by the hard-line Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power two years ago.

Freedom House, the Washington-based human-rights organization, says there have been more recorded incidents of violence against India's Christian minority in the past year than in the previous half-century.

The most shocking incident took place in January, when Hindu thugs burned alive Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two little boys. That was far from a isolated incident.

In 1998, the Catholic Bishop's Conference in India reported 108 cases of beatings, stonings, church burnings, looting of religious schools and institutions, and other attacks on Catholics and evangelicals.

It has been just as bad this year. Just last month, a Catholic priest working in the same territory as the Staines family was murdered while saying Mass for converts, his heart pierced by a poison-tipped arrow.

Why the attacks? Hindu nationalist leaders, particularly those associated with the BJP-allied World Hindu Congress (VHP), claim Christians are on "conversion overdrive."

This is preposterous. Despite being present in India for almost 2,000 years, and educating hundreds of millions of Indian children, Christianity claims the allegiance of less than 3 percent of the country's people.

Even in Orissa state, site of the worst anti-Christian violence, fewer than 500 conversions occur each year.

Still, Hindu nationalists continue to make wild-eyed assertions, such as VHP leader Mohan Joshi's recent statement that missionary homes run by Mother Teresa's order were "nothing but conversion centers."

Not true, but if it were, so what?

We know perfectly well what would have become of the diseased and the destitute had Mother Teresa's nuns not rescued them from the street: They would have been left to die in the gutter condemned by a culture that decrees these lowborn souls deserve their fate.

"What has the VHP done to better the life of the low castes? The answer is nothing," says Freedom House investigator Joseph Assad.

"When I was in India, I talked to one Christian who was forcibly reconverted to Hinduism. He told me when no one cared for us, Christians came and gave us food, gave us shelter and gave us medicine."

An Indian Protestant activist who lives in New Jersey told me BJP rule has meant open season on followers of Christ.

"The last two years have been unprecedented," the man says. "They have burned churches down, raped nuns, killed people. We complain to the government, but they look the other way."

The Hindu militants certainly do not represent the sentiments of all Hindus. But these thugs have the tacit support and protection of the ruling BJP. Indeed, the BJP Web site condemns "Semitic monotheism"—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—for "bringing intolerance to India."

This is what is known to professional propagandists as the Big Lie. No wonder Hindu hard-liners confidently pillage Christian communities.

How many more Hindu-led atrocities will Christians and others suffer before Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee calls off the nationalist dogs?

Will it take a physical assault on the Holy Father for the world to wake up to the kind of place Gandhi's great nation has become.

IN HONOR OF THE PUERTO RICAN
ASSOCIATION FOR HUMAN DE-
VELOPMENT, INC., ON ITS 25TH
ANNIVERSARY GALA CELEBRA-
TION

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 4, 1999

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Puerto Rican Association for Human Development, Inc., for 25 years of hard work and dedication to the residents of Middlesex County, the State of New Jersey, and the Hispanic community.

For years, PRAHD has been committed to improving the standard for living of Hispanic families through the administration of programs and services which address the social, economic, health, and educational status of these communities.

Founded in 1974 as a charitable organization by the Hispanic leadership of the Perth Amboy area, the Puerto Rican Association for Human Development operates a number of service programs. From day care, educational tutoring, and youth and family counseling, to emergency legal, housing, and medical assistance, drug prevention, and various senior services, the PRAHD serve more than 12,000 people annually. The agency creates alliances with other organizations to help revitalize communities by assisting people link needs with resources.

Since its inception, PRAHD has expanded to a comprehensive service agency with a budget of more than 1.6 million dollars through funding from federal, state, county, and city governments; the United Way of New Jersey; the United Way of Tri-County/IBM; the Turrell Fund; local corporations; and individual donors.

The agency is governed by an eleven-member board of directors selected from the community, and is administered by Executive Director Lydia Trinidad, who is also PRAHD's Chief Executive Officer. PRAHD also relies on the support and effort of community volunteers who work in all areas of agency operations.

For its unwavering commitment to the residents of New Jersey and its continued efforts on behalf of Hispanics, I ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing the outstanding work of the Puerto Rican Association for Human Development on its 25th Anniversary.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE INAUGURATION OF DR. MARGUERITE ARCHIE-HUDSON AS PRESIDENT OF TALLADEGA COLLEGE

HON. BOB RILEY

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 4, 1999

Mr. RILEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Dr. Marguerite Archie-Hudson on the occasion of her inauguration on November 7,